

Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan

Concept Plan

This Concept plan is an overview of the main ideas that will guide the preparation of the detailed plan elements for the Comprehensive Plan.

The Concept Plan is based on the findings of the Analysis of Conditions and Issues along with an evaluation of the three Conceptual Alternatives. The three alternatives were summarized as:

- A: Promote a long-term, environmentally sound and cost-effective land use pattern for future growth in Eau Claire and across the metropolitan area.
- B: Ensure a cost-effective and compatible land use pattern within the Urban Sewer Service Area over the next twenty years.
- C: Minimize the costs of municipal services, especially costs related to fringe development.

Public participation included several meetings of the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Community Forum (April 3, 2004), a meeting among the Committee, the Plan Commission and the City Council, a public opinion survey on the City's Web site, interest group meetings, interviews, articles in the Eau Claire *Leader-Telegram*, two newsletters published by the City and pages about the plan on the City's Web site.

Overall Goals

1. **Fringe Growth:** Expand the Sewer Service Area and protect it for efficient, compact urban growth. The city intends to seek the cooperation of adjacent Towns in this effort.
2. **Neighborhood Protection and Improvement:** Keep older neighborhood attractive and vital through improved streets, parks and services, code enforcement, design standards and selective redevelopment.
3. **Natural Environment:** Protect and enhance the major natural features of Eau Claire such as wooded hillsides, vistas and waterfronts.
4. **Intergovernmental Cooperation:** Improve intergovernmental coordination on land use, utilities, roads, drainage, parks, boundaries and school sites.
5. **Economic Development:** Continue to work with county, state and private organizations to diversify and expand the local economy while raising the standard of living.
6. **City Fiscal Health:** Improve and stabilize City fiscal conditions by keeping cost increases in line with revenue growth.

Major Assumptions

- Proactive local government is essential for creating a high-quality city. .
- It is critical to the long-term future of Eau Claire that it be able to grow efficiently on its perimeter.
- Collaborative growth management among Eau Claire, the Towns and the two Counties is possible and mutually beneficial.
- Greater cooperation among governments will be required to meet the needs of a growing population.
- Most growth should be accommodated in sewered areas in and around Eau Claire.
- Urban density is desirable.
- Prosperity is enhanced if growth is planned and managed.
- Public facilities help the economy.
- The public and private sectors should collaborate.
- Redevelopment sometimes requires public assistance.
- Environmental protection is desirable.
- The vitality of Downtown and the older neighborhoods in important.
- Existing neighborhoods should be protected.
- Current public revenue problems are cyclical.

Elements of the Eau Claire Concept Plan

Growth Management and Land Use

Growth Management Areas: Growth will be managed in and around Eau Claire using these five Areas:

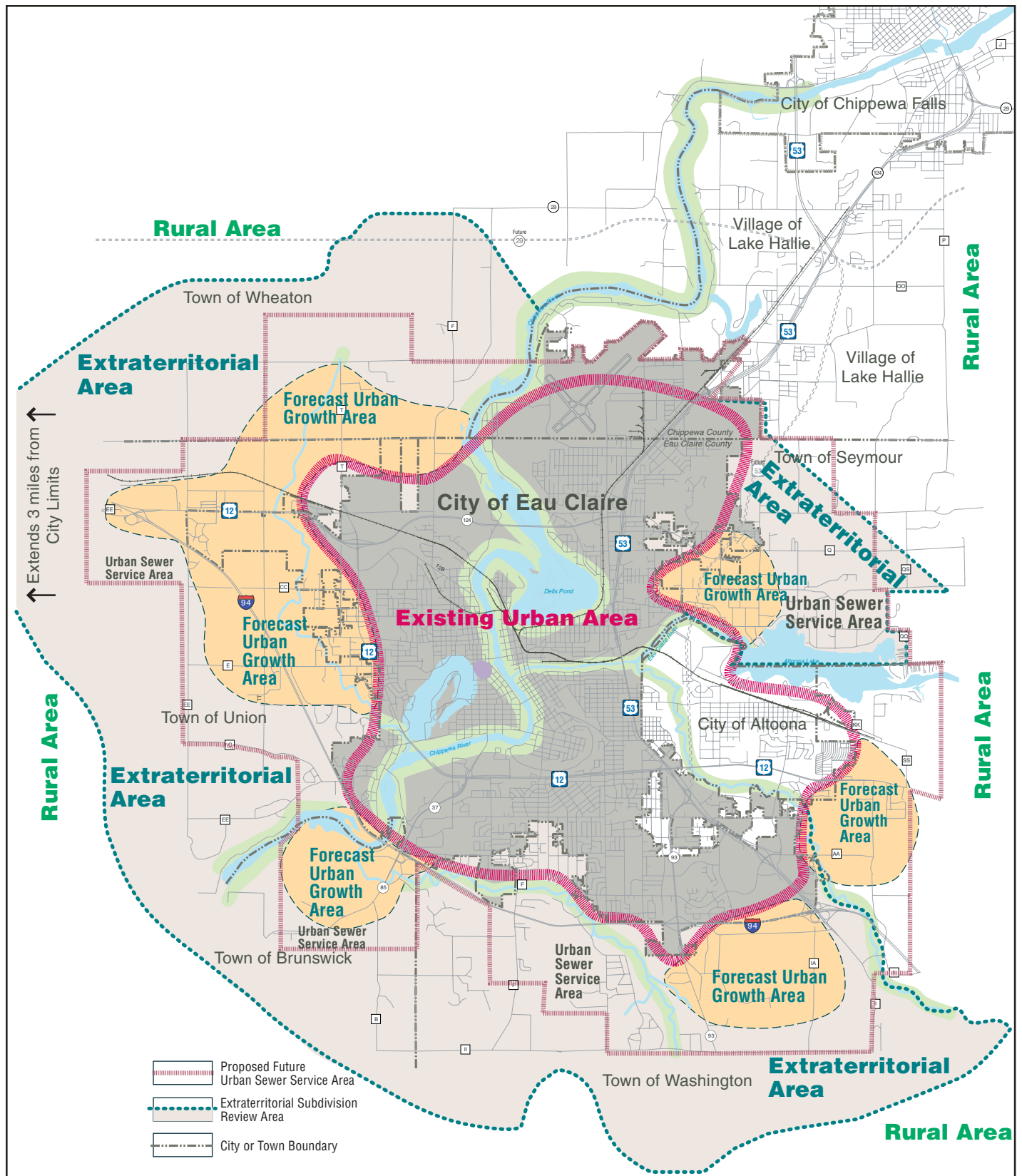
- Existing Urban Area
- Urban Sewer Service Area
- Extraterritorial Subdivision Review Area
- Rural Area

Eau Claire will prepare and adopt plans for land use, roads and the sequential extension of City sewer and water lines in the **Existing Urban Area** and the **Urban Sewer Service Area** .

The **Urban Sewer Service Area**, a district approved by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, will be used to plan and regulate the extension of sanitary sewer lines.

The **Extraterritorial Subdivision Review Area**, a district and powers adopted by a City under State law, will be used to regulate lot size or housing density and prohibit uses of land that would be highly incompatible with the *Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan*.

The City will consult with and seek the cooperation of the surrounding Towns and Counties to accomplish what it regards as mutually beneficial growth management objectives. Those objectives include compact and well-designed urban edge growth, the economic extension of City utilities and roads, and the preservation of nearby rural land use and productive farmland at least until it is converted to urban use. That cooperation may be achieved during this comprehensive planning process or subsequent to it.



Housing Density in the Extraterritorial Subdivision Review Area: In the Extraterritorial Subdivision Review Area, including the Urban Sewer Service Area, there should not be more than 2 houses per 40 acres until City sewer and water lines become available to any given property, after which urban densities should be achieved. The City will seek agreements with the Towns and the County to achieve this policy, including alternative approaches such as:

- **Large lots** (10 acres or greater)
- **Small lots** with a low average density calculated across tracts of 40 to 640 acres
 - Parcels need only be large enough to meet County sewage and well regulations
- **Clustered lots** with set aside open space
 - County or Town zoning should not establish permanent open space in the Extraterritorial Subdivision Review Area, except for public parks, either by zoning or private covenants
 - Set-aside open space should be resubdividable in the future if or when public sewer lines arrive
- **Transfer of development rights** within a Town
 - From the Extraterritorial Subdivision Review Area to another portion of the Town

Housing Density in the Rural Area: Growth management in the **Rural Area** will be left to the County and the Towns.

Methods of Implementing the Growth Management Plan. Eau Claire will use any or all of these methods to achieve its growth management objectives:

- Intergovernmental **agreements** with the Towns and possibly the Counties regarding the sequence or timing of annexation, in combination with controls on land use and lot size or housing density
- **Joint extraterritorial zoning** among the City and the Towns
- **Extraterritorial Subdivision Review** in conjunction with Official Maps of roads, utility lines, surface water drainage facilities and land use
- Amendments to the boundary of the **Urban Sewer Service Area** through the updating of the *Chippewa Falls / Eau Claire Urban Sewer Service Plan for 2010*
- Approving **annexation petitions** that represent planned, orderly growth
- A **staging plan** and map for sewer and water extensions.

Compact Growth: The City will encourage development that is generally more compact and dense than recent past patterns. Each new neighborhood will be designed to include both detached and attached forms of housing.

Staged Growth and Annexation: Eau Claire will solicit comments from the adjacent Towns and adopt a plan for the sequential annexation of land and the extension of City sewer and water lines. The City will try to gain agreement from each affected Town government on that growth staging plan. Eau Claire will then encourage annexation petitions consistent with that general plan of staged and orderly development, possibly including property that may not be developed immediately, in order to effectively manage perimeter growth to the mutual benefit of the City and the Towns.

Redevelopment: Eau Claire will support redevelopment primarily by planning and zoning certain sites for more intensive or different land uses than their present use. In special circumstances, the City will use tools such as tax increment financing to support redevelopment when it can be demonstrated that the monetary and other benefits to the City justify the investment risk.

Environmental Protection: Sensitive or unique natural resources such as floodplains, steep slopes, major wooded areas, major vistas, streams, wetlands, water quality, shorelines and riverbanks will be protected or restored through regulation and/or City investment.

Planning and Annexation Considerations: In its growth management plan, Eau Claire will consider factors such as:

- Maintaining a compact and regular pattern of growth and boundaries
- Minimizing infrastructure and service costs
- Designing attractive neighborhoods
- Preserving prime farmland
- Responding to market demands for development.

Utilities

Service Area: Eau Claire will continue its long-standing policy of providing sanitary sewer service only to properties within its jurisdiction (plus prior agreed areas) for the sake of fiscal health, redevelopment and growth management.

Intergovernmental Understanding: The City will try to gain an understanding and agreement with the adjacent Towns and the Counties that there is mutual benefit in staged, orderly utility extensions, annexation and compact urban growth into territory planned and regulated for that purpose.

Responsibilities: Land developers will be responsible for improving or extending local and collector streets, minor utility lines, and for participating in the cost of improving arterial roads and trunk utility lines.

Sewage Treatment Plant: Eau Claire will partner with the City of Altoona to upgrade the sewage treatment plant prior to 2020.

Urban Sewer Service Area Boundaries: Eau Claire will request the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to amend the boundary of the Urban Sewer Service Area to reflect the fact that service will not be extended to the Village of Lake Hallie and to allocate sufficient additional acreage in the northwest, west and south to accommodate

planned growth consistent with the *Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan*.

Water Utility: The City will maintain public ownership of the water system and continue to safeguard the quality of the water supply.

Surface Water Management: Eau Claire will continue to refer to its 1992 *Comprehensive Surfacewater Management Plan* and to implement the provisions of its 2003 WPDES surface water management permit from the Department of Natural Resources including updating its subdivision regulations.

Transportation

Supportive Land Use Planning: The Land Use Plan will promote increased concentrations of jobs and housing in order to efficiently use existing transportation infrastructure and provide for the viability of alternative transportation modes.

Existing Streets: The City will focus public investment on improving the existing street network to enhance through movement and traffic dispersion, while minimizing negative transportation impacts to neighborhoods through traffic calming and streetscape enhancements. In addition, the City should work to minimize transportation impacts to the natural environment.

WisDOT Improvements: The City will work with WisDOT to complete remaining programmed improvements such as the Birch Street bridge and the turn-back of Hastings Way to the City and the County.

MPO Transportation Plan: Eau Claire will take an active role in helping the Metropolitan Planning Commission formulate its next transportation plan for the Chippewa Falls – Eau Claire metropolitan area.

Minor Residential Streets: The width of new local (minor) residential streets should be decreased from current standards. New local residential streets should be fully interconnected and the number of cul-de-sacs minimized. Rebuilt residential streets may also be reduced in width to the extent that on-street parking and other demands allow.

Access Management: Access will be managed on major streets to improve traffic flow and road capacity, always with a concern for neighborhood livability.

Transit: Eau Claire will seek opportunities to increase ridership on its bus system through new dense development along transit corridors and in Downtown. A more attractive and functional multi-modal transit center in Downtown will be sought.

Bicycling: Eau Claire should build a city-wide network of interconnected bicycle paths and lanes serving both recreational and transportation functions. The City will require that on-street bicycle lanes be installed with most new arterial or collector roads. The City and the Counties should coordinate to create a county-wide network of off-road bicycle paths in public greenways.

Sidewalks: Public sidewalks should be installed along both sides of each new or reconstructed local or collector street. Exceptions to this sidewalk policy may be granted

to protect major natural features or short cul-de-sac streets.

Street Reconstruction: Eau Claire will continue its program of assessing the surface condition of its local streets and budgeting for their systematic maintenance and periodic reconstruction.

Alley Reconstruction: Eau Claire will consider enhancing its program for reconstructing alleys.

Inter-City Passenger Rail Service: Continue to monitor the work on the Midwest Regional Rail System and promote the two route alternatives that include Eau Claire.

Airport: Eau Claire will coordinate with the administrators of the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport in their effort to maintain and improve passenger and freight service. However, the City will insist that airport improvements are designed in a way that minimizes adverse effects on nearby roads, bridges, utilities and existing or future residential neighborhoods.

Natural Resources

Protections: Wetlands, floodplains, shorelands and slopes in excess of 20 percent will be protected through the zoning and subdivision review process consistent with the *Chippewa Falls / Eau Claire Urban Sewer Service Plan for 2010*.

Studies: The City will conduct resource management studies in response to problems or in conjunction with urban growth, and will update its plans or regulations in response to the outcome of those studies.

Riparian Open Space: The City will continue to work with private developers to set aside or dedicate land along rivers and creeks for natural open space.

Other Benefits: The natural environment will be protected, showcased and used as an economic development incentive.

Parks

New Parks: The park system plan will be expanded to serve locations planned for residential development. Future parks will tend to be larger (10 to 15 acres) and continue to serve the customary ½ mile radius of Neighborhood Playgrounds. At a minimum, a new Park or Playground will be planned to serve each square-mile neighborhood or smaller area depending on natural resources and boundaries such as major roads. A major athletic field complex will be provided in the northern half of the city for organized softball and soccer. New parks will be paired with future schools.

Riparian Open Space: Parks and linear public open space with some trails will be acquired in certain locations adjacent to the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers and Sherman, Lowes and Otter Creeks.

Urban Design

Zoning: The City will continue to apply the site design provisions of its zoning ordinance (which was amended and improved after the 1993 plan) to gradually create more attractive multi-family and commercial areas.

Guidelines: The *Eau Claire Multi-Family Housing Design Guidelines* and the *Eau Claire Landscape Manual* will be made more comprehensive and rigorous and woven into the zoning ordinance. The City will require infill and redevelopment buildings to be designed with sensitivity to their context. Newer neighborhoods will be designed to be attractive, walkable and interesting with better streetscape, site planning, building architecture, signage and lighting.

Infill: Infill and redevelopment buildings will be required to be designed with sensitivity to their context, including features such as land use type, building height, bulk and placement, architectural details, parking, landscaping and lighting.

New Neighborhoods: Newer neighborhoods will be designed to be attractive, walkable and interesting with better streetscape, site planning, building architecture, signage and lighting.

WisDOT: New public infrastructure will set a high standard of design. The City will require that new or rebuilt roads or bridges include aesthetic treatments beyond those provided by WisDOT or the County.

Future Local Streets: Most streets will be interconnected unless topography or other factors prohibit such connections.

Street Trees: Trees will be required to be installed by land developers in the right-of-way along both sides of all new local and collector streets.

Sidewalks: Public sidewalks should be installed along both sides of each new or reconstructed local or collector street. Exceptions to this sidewalk policy may be granted to protect major natural features or short cul-de-sac streets.

Multi-Use and Mixed-Use Development: Eau Claire will support and encourage through zoning and this plan the creation of sites with two or more differing types of land use (multi-use) as well as buildings with housing or offices above businesses (mixed-use) in both established and new areas. Certain redevelopment projects may be ideal candidates for mixed- and multi-use design. As always, considerations will include context, site planning, building design and landscape design.

Lighting: The City will amend its zoning ordinance to require a lighting plan as part of each commercial or industrial site plan. The regulations will require that lighting elements not be visible from off the site and that light cut-off features be used to control glare.

Economic Development

Infrastructure: The City will continue to work with entities such as the Gateway Industrial Park Corporation and the Eau Claire Economic Development Corporation to extend utilities or roads as needed to industrial and business sites.

Institutional Campuses: The City will promote master planning for the institutional campuses around the downtown medical center and the south side medical center-college campuses. These locations will be encouraged to intensify.

Industrial Parks: The City will support industrial park development by zoning adequate land for future development and will acquire and develop industrial parks through the Gateway Industrial Park Corporation.

Coordination: Eau Claire will continue to promote the coordination of economic development efforts among public and private organizations in the region.

Existing Neighborhoods and Districts

Public Facilities: Eau Claire will continue to improve streets, sidewalks, parks and other public facilities in established areas in order to promote private reinvestment and infill, housing and business rehabilitation and confidence in those locations. (Refer also to the policies on local streets, sidewalks and alleys under Transportation.)

Redevelopment: Eau Claire will assist redevelopment of small areas (either housing or business) through plans and zoning and, when prudent and necessary, with public works or direct financial assistance.

Design Guidelines: Eau Claire will use zoning and design guidelines to ensure that infill and redevelopment buildings are compatible with nearby structures and they enhance rather than harm nearby investments. The City will publish traditional neighborhood design guidelines and urge their use by local developers.

Remodeling and Zoning: The City will review its zoning ordinance to ensure that it allows the reasonable remodeling and rehabilitation of homes in the older neighborhoods that may not be in conformance with current regulations while protecting the design integrity of the immediate area.

Downtown

North Barstow District: The City will complete the North Barstow District redevelopment and riverfront park. Other public improvements in the Historic Waterfront (central business district) will be conservatively financed, such as streetscape, plaza and parking improvements, along with key land redevelopment, consistent with the Downtown Action Agenda. The remaining industrial, parking and open storage sites along the downtown riverfront will be converted to more appropriate land uses, through City leadership and assistance.

Role: The City will continue to market the Downtown as a target location for additional professional and corporate offices, convention, hospitality and entertainment facilities, arts and culture, housing, specialty retail business, medicine and government.

Coordination: The City will continue to cooperate with and assist the downtown revitalization efforts of other organizations.

Community Facilities

Sharing Agreements: Eau Claire will continue to enter into and expand a variety of sharing agreements with local, county, state and federal units of government.

Indoor Recreation: The City will encourage other community organizations to provide for the indoor recreation and meeting room needs.

Parks and Schools: Parks will be paired with elementary schools and used to enhance older, established neighborhoods and future districts.

Streets, Sidewalks and Alleys in Older Neighborhoods: Refer to policies under Transportation.

Elementary Schools: Elementary education will continue to be delivered through improved schools located in residential neighborhoods. Schools will evolve to become “neighborhood centers” that may be used for many community activities, meetings and events.

Housing

Assistance Programs: The City will continue to administer its current housing assistance programs such as rent assistance, homeownership, public housing and subsidized housing for the elderly, and to enforce the Building and Housing codes.

Variety: Each major new residential neighborhood will be required to include a variety of housing types (detached and attached).

Historic Preservation

Protection: The City will work to protect significant historical and architectural properties and districts identified by the Eau Claire Landmarks Commission and the State Historical Society.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Sharing Agreements: Eau Claire will continue to work with all nearby and overlapping units of government to find additional ways to share or consolidate facilities, services and programs for mutual benefit.

Metropolitan Planning: Eau Claire will lead the way to create a metropolitan framework for growth and preservation.

Intergovernmental Agreement: Eau Claire will seek to gain an understanding and agreement with the adjacent Towns on compact, staged urban growth and the protection of unobstructed, efficient and economic locations for growth.